

Message Text

SECRET

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/PAN:SBMELL:JK

APPROVED BY S/AE - AMB. BUNKER

ARA-WHLUERS

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S/S - MR. SEBASTIAN

L - MR. FELDMAN (INFO)

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

SECRET STATE 300581

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: THE SECRETARY'S BILATERAL WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

BOYD, 12/3/76, 4:00 PM - SUMMARY

1. BOYD DELIVERED A PRIVATE LETTER FROM TORRIJOS ON THE BOMBINGS WHICH AGAIN REJECTED THE ALLEGATIONS OF NATIONAL GUARD INVOLVEMENT AND "ADVISED" THE UNITED STATES AGAINST MAKING "THREATS" TO PANAMA. THE SECRETARY AFFIRMED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS NOT THREATENING PANAMA, BUT ADDED THAT OUR INFORMATION IS HIGHLY CREDIBLE AND WE WILL NOT REVEAL IT. BOTH AGREED THAT THIS AFFAIR SHOULD NOW BE CLOSED WITHOUT PUBLIC DISCLOSURE. THE SECRETARY REMINDED THE MINISTER, HOWEVER, THAT WE TAKE THIS MATTER SERIOUSLY.

2. ON THE NEGOTIATIONS THE SECRETARY VOLUNTEERED THAT HE WOULD SEND BUNKER TO PANAMA AGAIN, PROBABLY BEFORE CHRISTMAS -- TO "CLEAN UP REMAINING UNDERBRUSH" AND TO "SYM-BOLIZE IN A POSITIVE WAY THE CONTINUITY OF THE UNITED

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STATES COMMITMENT TO THE NEGOTIATION." BOYD WAS GRATIFIED.

1. THE SECRETARY EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD BE
3. THE SECRETARY EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD BE
FOR THE NEW ADMINISTRATION TO MAKE THE FINAL, CRITICAL
DECISIONS, AND HE COULD IN NO WAY SPEAK FOR IT. "I
CANNOT SADDLE THEM WITH MAJOR MOVES."

4. HE ADDED THAT THE UNITED STATES BASIC, REMAINING
CONCERN IS WITH CANAL "DEFENSE." AGREEMENT ON CANAL
OPERATION SEEMED WITHIN REACH. HE DECLINED TO EXPLAIN
THIS ADMINISTRATION'S PRESENT THINKING ON THE DURATION
ISSUE TO BOYD, SAYING NO USEFUL PURPOSE WOULD BE SERVED
THEREBY.

5. RESPONDING TO BOYD'S PERSISTENT QUERIES RESPECTING
THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S POSTURE VIS-A-VIS THE NEGOTIA-
TIONS, THE SECRETARY SAID HE HAD SPOKEN TO THE PRESIDENT-
ELECT ON PANAMA; HE WOULD BE SUGGESTING THAT SECRETARY-
DESIGNATE VANCE GIVE RESOLUTION OF THIS PROBLEM A HIGH
PRIORITY; AND HE WOULD DO ALL HE COULD TO KEEP THE
MATTER FROM BECOMING A PARTISAN ONE IN THE UNITED STATES.

6. OVER THE PAST YEAR PANAMA HAS SHOWN GREAT PATIENCE
AND WISDOM, HE EXPLAINED, AND IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT 1977
WAS THE OPPORTUNE TIME FOR CONCLUDING A NEW TREATY. HE
FELT THAT OPTIMISM IS IN ORDER. SO DID BOYD. THE
SECRETARY WARNED THAT CONFRONTATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD
CERTAINLY NOT HELP, HOWEVER. BOYD SAID HIS GOVERNMENT
IS NOT LOOKING FOR THEM.

COMMENT: THE EXCHANGE WAS PLEASANT ENOUGH BUT RESTRAINED.
FIRST NAMES WERE NOT USED. THOUGH THE BOMBING EPISODE
SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN PUT TO REST, IT LINGERED IN THE AIR.
FOR ONCE BOYD DID NOT TALK RIGHT PAST THE SECRETARY, BUT
LISTENED.

OBVIOUSLY THE MINISTER WAS PLEASED AT THE PROSPECT OF
BUNKER'S RETURN, WHICH HIS GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN SEEKING
VIGOROUSLY. HE EXPRESSED NO DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE
SECRETARY'S COMMENT THAT THIS WOULD BE A SYMBOLIC,
CLEARING-THE-UNDERBRUSH ROUND OF TALKS.

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ROBINSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGREEMENTS, FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETINGS, MEETING REPORTS, CANALS, NEGOTIATIONS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 DEC 1976
Decapton Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchant0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE300581
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: SMBELL:JK
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P840099-0440
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761253/aaaabtmk.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchant0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 JUL 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <08 NOV 2004 by buchant0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE SECRETARY'S BILATERAL WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOYD, 12/3/76 - SUMMARY
TAGS: PFOR, PEPR, PM, PQ, US, PN, (KISSINGER, HENRY A), (BOYD GUARDIA, AQUILINO EDGARDO)
To: SECRETARY PANAMA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006